

PREHISTORIC BACKGROUND

Paleoindian Period

Prehistoric occupation of North Carolina dates to the Paleoindian Period, which is thought to have begun about 12,000 B.C. Evidence of occupation during this period is generally sparse. The temporal marker for this time is the fluted projectile point, usually recovered as surface finds. One such fluted point was recovered from neighboring Duplin County in a 1989 Coastal Carolina Research survey for the Agri-Business Park. The material is local, poor quality, milky quartz and measures 36 x 19 mm (Lautzenheiser 1989a).

The most important excavated North Carolina site yielding Paleoindian components is the Hardaway site, located on the west bank of the Yadkin River in Stanly County. This site is unusual in that it contains stratified deposits including Paleoindian materials. Investigations at the Hardaway site form the basis of the Paleoindian and Early Archaic sequences defined by Coe (1964) for the Piedmont, which are generally valid for the Coastal Plain as well.

The classic fluted Clovis projectile point was not recovered from the Hardaway site, but it is thought to be contemporary with the Hardaway phase (Ward 1983), the earliest occupation at the site dating to at least 8000 B.C. The Hardaway and Hardaway-Dalton projectile point types are broad, thin blades with concave bases. The Hardaway-Dalton type has a deeply concave base and shallow side-notches (Coe 1964).

The subsistence pattern during this time is assumed to have been a hunting and gathering lifestyle. Recent work at the Hardaway site has focused on attempts to retrieve subsistence data to obtain a more complete view of Paleoindian lifeways (Ward 1983). Investigations at other Paleoindian sites in the Southeast have demonstrated a uniformity of tool types for the period. Work at the Adams site, a single-component Paleoindian site in western Kentucky, has compiled a complete sequence of Clovis point manufacture. Tools for bone and woodworking and a variety of scraping, cutting, chopping, shredding, and planing tools were present (Sanders 1988).

Paleoindian sites with stratified deposits have not been identified from the Coastal Plain. Phelps (1983) reports one site, 31PT3, located on an older Tar River levee, which has a possible buried Paleoindian stratum. The zone, buried 1.1 m below surface, is overlain by Woodland occupation zones.

A projectile point type, transitional between the Paleoindian and Archaic periods, has been proposed by Phelps (1976) for the Coastal Plain. These points have ground bases with extreme basal thinning rather than flutes and are notched for a slightly "eared" effect. Phelps suggests that the rudimentary corner-notches and small size of the points indicate changing ideas of production. Since most of these points are of quartz or

quartzite, however, it is also possible that the style reflects adaptation to locally available material.

Archaic Period

The Archaic Period (8000-1000 B.C.) was apparently a time of climatic change. A shift from boreal forests to northern hardwoods occurred around the time of the Early Archaic Period (8000-5000 B.C.). In the early Holocene, a cool, moist climate prompted the expansion of species-rich Mixed Hardwood Forest in the Eastern United States. During this Hypsithermal, the Oak-Chestnut Forest became dominant in the central and southern Appalachians, oak and hickory were replaced by southern pine on the Coastal Plain, and the Oak-Hickory-Southern Pine Forest covered the Piedmont (Delcourt and Delcourt 1981, 1985). These changes were probably accompanied by an increase in population, as seen in the greater number of sites with Archaic components (Phelps 1983).

The Early Archaic Palmer phase is typified by a small corner-notched blade with a straight ground base and pronounced serrations. The use of hafted end scrapers increased during this period (Coe 1964; Davis and Daniel 1990).

During the Kirk phase the points increased in size and basal grinding declined. A broad-stemmed, deeply serrated point gradually replaced the earlier corner-notched style. It is generally thought that in the Archaic Period there was a continuation of the hunting and gathering lifestyle, with a possible seasonal round of movement between base camps and hunting camps. The depth of the Kirk midden at the Hardaway site indicates a long-term occupation (Coe 1964).

During excavations at Icehouse Bottom in Tennessee (Chapman 1977), a bifurcate projectile point tradition was stratigraphically isolated between the Early Archaic Kirk and the Middle Archaic Stanly traditions. No major shift in the artifact assemblage was observed except for the bifurcate point, and the shift was viewed as a modification in the hafting element. The bifurcate tradition was not identified at the Hardaway site, although more recent investigations at the Haw River in Chatham County have confirmed its stratigraphic placement in North Carolina (Claggett and Cable 1982). Chapman (1975:256) proposed that the distribution of bifurcate points was limited to the boundaries of the eastern deciduous forest. He suggested that the ecological condition found in the Coastal Plain during the Early Archaic period discouraged the expansion of the bifurcate tradition.

More recent work in the North Carolina Coastal Plain, however, indicates that the bifurcate tradition is more common than previously thought. A survey in Edgecombe County (Lautzenheiser 1989b) recovered two bifurcate projectile points, and a survey in the Sand Hills (Lautzenheiser et al. 1990) recovered three of the points.

The Middle Archaic Stanly phase appears to have developed out of the preceding phases (Coe 1964; Phelps 1983). The major difference in the artifact assemblage seems to be the appearance of polished stone atlatl weights.

The Morrow Mountain and Guilford phases appear during the Middle Archaic period (5000-3000 B.C.). Coe (1964) has referred to these phases as the western intrusive horizons. The Morrow Mountain projectile point type is a relatively small point with short, tapering stems. The Guilford phase, with no apparent cultural antecedents in the region, is characterized by long, lanceolate points and chipped stone axes.

The Halifax phase was identified from the Gaston site on the Roanoke River and did not appear at Hardaway or Doerschuk, the other sites utilized by Coe in his formation of the North Carolina archaeological sequence (Coe 1964). The Halifax zone overlay the Guilford material. The Halifax point type, usually made of vein quartz, is a slender blade with shallow side-notches. The base and side-notches were usually ground. The Halifax point is well represented from sites in the northern Coastal Plain. Coe (1964) has proposed a northern origin for the Halifax phase.

The terminal Archaic is the Savannah River phase (3000-1000 B.C.). During this period there is evidence of larger sites containing steatite bowls, human burials, and prepared hearths, which suggests a more settled lifestyle (Ward 1983). The Savannah River projectile point is a large, heavy, triangular blade with a broad stem (Coe 1964).

Woodland Period

The Early Woodland Period (1000 B.C.-300 B.C.) is marked by the introduction of the bow and arrow and the beginnings of ceramic manufacture. In the Early Woodland Period, regional differences begin to be noticed. The Early Woodland and its transition from the Archaic Period is the least known of the prehistoric periods from the Coastal Plain (Phelps 1983).

The earliest ceramics are noted during the terminal Archaic Period and are probably dated around 2500-2000 B.C. (Phelps 1983). They are fiber-tempered wares that are reported from the southern Coastal Plain, generally below the Neuse River drainage. The reported specimens are all Stallings Plain and do not include the decorated types. The ware is reported from at least 38 sites, all but a few in the area below the Neuse River (Phelps 1983).

The Early Woodland ceramic type in the northern Coastal Plain is a coarse sand-tempered ware called Deep Creek. The cord-marked wares are the majority type, with minor quantities of net-impressed and fabric-impressed wares (Phelps 1983). The large Roanoke Triangular projectile points are also a part of the artifact assemblage. Phelps indicates that the type had its origin to the north in the Mid-Atlantic region. In the southern Coastal Plain, the ceramic type during this period is also a coarse-sand-tempered ware termed New River (Loftfield 1976). The New River series is differentiated by the

presence of a thong-marked ware in addition to cord-marked and net- and fabric-impressed finishes.

An earlier ceramic, Thom's Creek Punctate, is also reported from the southern Coastal Plain. This ceramic type is a nontempered, fine-textured ware that is identified by its punctated decoration. The reed-punctated variety is decorated with individual linear reed punctations. The core area of this type is in South Carolina, although it is known to extend into the southern Coastal Plain of North Carolina. Carbon dates of 2220 B.C. and 1870 B.C. provide chronological placement for the Thom's Creek Ware (Trinkley 1976).

The Middle Woodland (300 B.C.-A.D. 800) is called the Mount Pleasant phase in the northern Coastal Plain (Phelps 1983) and the Cape Fear phase in the southern Coastal Plain (South 1976). The ceramics are tempered with sand and pebbles and are generally fabric-impressed or cord-marked on the surface.

South (1976) has defined a clay-tempered ware, Hanover, which is associated with the Middle Woodland period. The clay temper generally appeared to be crushed sherds. South defined two surface finishes, cord-marked and fabric-impressed. Loftfield (1976) has also defined a clay-tempered ware for the southern Coastal Plain, termed Carteret, and reports a minority of smooth types. Net-impressed wares have also been recovered from the southern Coastal Plain (Lautzenheiser 1989). Hanover wares are frequently found in the same contexts as Mount Pleasant ceramics (Phelps 1983). Because of the priority of South's typology, the term Hanover is used in this report to refer to clay-tempered wares.

The burial pattern for the Middle Woodland period is usually a flexed or semi-flexed inhumation or a cremation. In the southern Coastal Plain and Sand Hills regions, there is a rather extensive distribution of low sand burial mounds. These mounds are generally reported south of the Neuse River; however, a few are known from north of the river (Phelps 1983). The Neuse River drainage appears to be the northern limit of mound distribution.

There is very little information pertaining to these mounds other than excavations of the McLean Mound in Cumberland County by Howard MacCord in 1961 (MacCord 1966) and of the Red Springs Mound in Robeson County by Bennie Keel (Keel 1970). Both noted minor evidence of burial goods in the mounds, and these goods were generally limited to broken shell beads and pipes in about 10 percent of the burials. Keel made no temporal assignment, but MacCord suggested a Middle Woodland placement.

More recent investigations of sand burial mounds in South Carolina (Trinkley 1989) indicated that the low mounds were covering secondary burials. The cultural affiliation of these mounds has not been defined. An early description of these mounds concerns four mounds recorded in Duplin County by J. A. Holmes during his 1883 geologic study of coastal North Carolina (Holmes 1916). The mounds ranged from 22 to 35 feet in diameter and stood only two or three feet above the ground surface. They were located on slightly elevated places in areas of sandy soil. Holmes opened two of the

mounds and tested the other two and determined that all contained skeletal material. A few ceramic sherds were recovered but no implements. Holmes also indicated the presence of additional mounds in Sampson, Robeson, Cumberland, and Wake counties.

A sand burial mound investigated in Sampson County (Hackbarth and Fournier-Hackbarth 1981) was described as a low circular mound 15 m in diameter and approximately 70 cm high. The mound contained intact stratigraphy, and bone preservation was good. The mound is located on an upland plain 125 m from a rank one stream.

The Late Woodland (A.D. 800-1650) is the last prehistoric period in the Coastal Plain, and the archaeological assemblages of this period can usually be related to ethnohistoric information. The artifact assemblage of the prehistoric Tuscarora includes "Cashie" ware, a pebble-tempered ceramic with a floated interior finish. In addition to conoidal pots and hemispherical bowls, the ceramics include beakers, ladles, and dippers (Phelps 1983). Also included in the Cashie assemblage are pipes, bone awls and perforators, shell beads, small Roanoke and Clarksville triangular projectile points, blades, celts, milling stones, and drills.

The Neuse River drainage has been proposed as a boundary for prehistoric coastal populations. In the tidewater areas of the Coastal Plain, the region north of the Neuse River is generally characterized by the presence of archaeological remains identified with the Algonkian peoples. The area south of the Neuse is generally thought to have been the territory of Siouan-speaking groups (Phelps 1983). Fiber-tempered ceramics and sand burial mounds, both southern traits, are rare north of the Neuse River.

In the southern Coastal Plain the inhabitants appear to have been Siouan (Phelps 1983; South 1976). Swanton (1946) indicated that the southern Coastal Plain was the territory of the Cape Fear Indians, who may have been part of the Waccamaw tribe. South's Oak Island phase is probably associated with these Indians.

The Oak Island ceramics are shell tempered, although in all of the sherds collected by South in his study the shell had leached out. Loftfield (1976) has also identified a shell-tempered ware from the south Coastal Plain, which he terms White Oak. South's specimens were mostly smooth, with a small number of net-impressed sherds present. Loftfield also reported cord-marked, fabric-impressed, and thong-impressed sherds.

Currently the Oak Island phase is best known for the coast proper. There is little data for the interior (Phelps 1983), and no meaningful statements can be made for this phase in the interior of the Coastal Plain.